

BOOK REVIEW

SALLY WASOWSKI. 2002. **Gardening with Prairie Plants: How to Create Beautiful Native Landscapes. Photography by Andy Wasowski.** (ISBN 0-8166-3087-9, pbk.) University of Minnesota Press. 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520. (Orders: www.upress.umn.edu, 612-627-1932, 612-627-1980 fax). \$29.95, 304 pp, 241 color photos, 335 figures, 8 1/2" × 11".

Most gardening books could be classified informative, educational and instructive. But rarely could a book on gardening be regarded as a page-turner. *Gardening with Prairie Plants* was such a pleasure to read that I had a hard time putting down. Wasowski begins her book by elaborating the on merits of gardening with native prairie plants and remarks "a prairie landscape can also be eye-poppingly gorgeous!" I would characterize this book in a similar light.

Gardening with Prairie Plants is generally divided into three main parts: I. Prairies and Prairie Gardens, II. Design, Installation, and Maintenance, and III. Plant Profiles. The first part defines a prairie, where prairies are located in North America and how prairies vary based on geography. The author follows with many examples of home prairie gardens, which perhaps are described better as testimonials to the advantages of native plant landscapes. Each one of these testimonials more or less describes how the homeowner installed and maintained their gardens, with a color photo and a figure of the landscape design to accompany the text. The next chapter, "Using Preserved and Replicated Prairies as Models", encourages the reader to determine the soil type for their proposed prairie plot and locate a nearby prairie example to model their garden by. Lowland, mesic, upland and sand prairies and savannas are all considered here.

Putting your newfound knowledge of prairies is put to work in Part II. The chapter entitled, "Designing Prairie Gardens", gives advice on planning your garden for your lifestyle and yard. This information is followed by clear and candid advice on garden installation, including preparing a seedbed, tilling and enriching the soil, collecting native seed and planting transplants. As well, readers will know exactly how to maintain their gardens with the author's advice on weed control, irrigation, prescribed burning and mowing. Conducting a safe controlled burn is considered in some detail, with an outline on the proper procedure.

The author's labor shines through in Part III, with the wealth of knowledge provided for each species included in the plant profiles. This part is divided into four chapters, which deal first with grasses, sedges and rushes, followed by warm season forbs, then cool season forbs and finally trees and shrubs. At the end of each chapter, a table is provided of all included species, which serves the reader in quickly identifying species that would grow best in their garden habitat. For each plant listed, information on common and scientific name, some diagnostic characters and habitat preferences are provided. Each species also has a map of its geographic distribution and many species have a lovely photo to accompany the description.

To say that the illustrations and photographs in this book are lovely would be a mild understatement. Exquisite and inspiring are two terms that might do them justice. Hats off to Michael Parkey and Andy Wasowski for their illustrations and photographs, respectively. Their work is the eye candy of this treatise. A short glossary of prairie terms, a list of gardening resources listed by state and an index with common and scientific names concludes this book.

In sum, this book would be of interest to anyone interested in native landscape gardening—homeowners, landscape architects, Master Gardeners and prairie plant enthusiasts. Those particularly interested in prairie restoration should not be without a copy of this book. It is pure pleasure to read.—Amy Trauth Nare, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX, 76102-4060, U.S.A., amy_trauth@yahoo.com*